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# Red Scout: A Digital Way to Train Beauty Consultants

By Patty Huntington

**SYDNEY** — First came the brands such as Aesop, Jurlique, Napoleon and Modelco. Now an Australian is exporting beauty training to the world.

Red Scout, an on-demand, e-Learning program developed by Sydney-based beauty consultant and training specialist Simone Pedersen, promises to deliver trained beauty retail staff on the sales floor in a fraction of the time of traditional basic training — and equipped with a far more holistic grasp of the business.

The program offers four interactive audio-visual modules in skin care, makeup, fragrance and retail sales and customer service, each taking 20 minutes to complete — the equivalent of six hours of traditional training according to Pedersen. Available in a standard five languages — but fully customizable (one European client needed it translated into 19 languages) — the program is also cost-effective: \$69.95 per license.

“A lot of the brands do a great job in training in product, but they forget about training in the category — if you sell a fragrance, you should know about the fragrance category in a lot of detail, including your competitors and the different fragrance families” says Pedersen, who received a 250,000 Australian dollar (\$259,128 at current exchange) Commercialisation Grant from the Australian federal government in April for being first to market with the concept.

“When someone starts this afternoon, they sign their contract, they can actually go online, do their training and be on the floor tomorrow trained and ready to go for business, which is really exciting because this hasn’t been able to be done before” she added.

Although Pedersen is working with global retailers such as DFS Galleria, her focus for now is Asia Pacific, where she sees the biggest growth potential and where her client list includes Hong Kong’s Lane Crawford and Malaysia’s Parkson Department Stores, which has 38,000 staff in over 100 stores in Malaysia, China, Vietnam and Indonesia.

A former primary school teacher and product manager at Chanel Australia and New Zealand, it was during Pedersen’s five-year tenure as general merchandising manager of cosmetics at Lane Crawford that she saw a gap in the market for specialist beauty



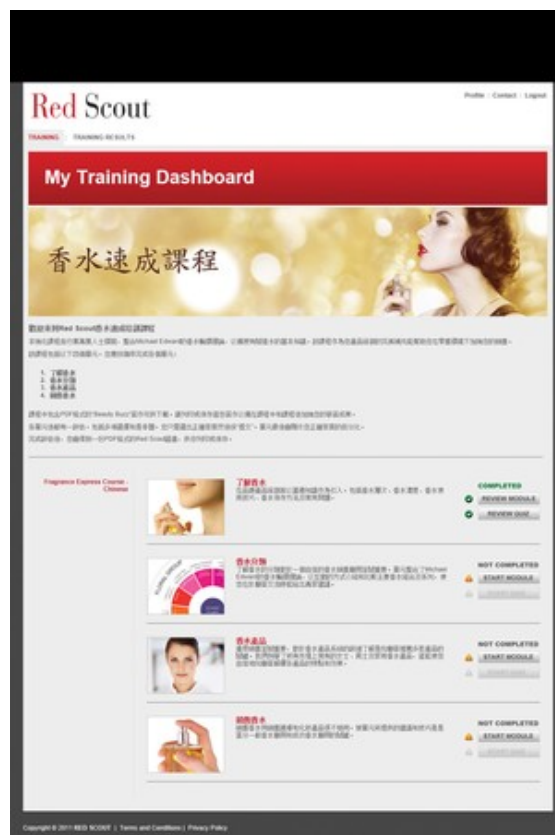
Simone Pedersen  
Photo By Courtesy

training.

“The customer has changed a lot but retail hasn’t been changing so much” says Pedersen, whose Lane Crawford initiatives included the introduction of a free Cosmetic Concierge service in 2004, training staff across all 200 brands on offer to provide personalized beauty advice.

“I think they [department stores] have got to break out of their box and go, ‘Let’s do this differently’” says Pedersen. “I think they’d make more profit if they made every person inside the store a personal shopper. Everybody knows that you don’t buy a total regime from the one brand anymore. Break down potentially the beauty brands. Don’t have the barriers up. Get the girls and guys who are on the floor to think differently about how they’re servicing. If the customer really needs something to suit their needs and it’s not on your counter, take them to the other counter”

According to Sydney-based beauty market analyst Jo-Anne Mason from bU Australasia, customer service is more important than ever for brick-and-mortar retailers and Red Scout could be “spot on the dollar.” The key focus of bU Australasia’s June 2012 market report was how the online universe has completely redefined the consumer perspective on customer service and Mason believes retailers urgently need to “tool up” their sales staff accordingly.



Red Scout website  
Photo By Courtesy

“They [consumers] can Google a product or a beauty concern and they’ll get a lot of answers quickly — the speed of being able to do that has totally changed their concept of service in store” says Mason. “When they go into a store now, they expect if they ask a question, that there will be quick, concise information and often that may need to be not brand-specific. Don’t just stand behind the counter and rabbit on about your product because they can do that themselves faster online. It’s a different world and the old rules don’t work.”